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USDA Inside USDA Information

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CONTENTS THIS WEEK

Inside "Inside..." this issue you'll find more about "A Better Way," regulation writing courses, the government's annual visual report, Wyoming's AGNET, and a few other bits and pieces of information you might enjoy.

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If you've seen "A Better Way" in recent weeks, you've noticed a trend away from interviews or demonstrations...a move toward short segments called "better ways" or "news you can use." Don Elder or Larry Quinn handle them, keep them usually under two minutes, and use slides, hand props or film newsclips to strengthen viewer interest.

THINGS GO BETTER

A typical example recently used eight segments...a SEA newsclip on "preventing grain elevator explosions," an apple harvest segment from Tom Netting (ESCS), two "better ways" subjects--one voiced by Don and one by Larry--a cooking demonstration on using low-calorie nonfat dry milk, and three interviews on rural education, rural transportation, and rural energy conservation. Longest segment was 5:20.

Tightening up the transitions between segments keeps an active pace from show opening to closing. More segments require more topics naturally, so more filmed features are being made. Three recent ones were on "something you can do" topics...installing a dimmer switch, replacing a sink trap, and replacing a door knob lock. Three others you'll soon see have to do with winter flowering plants, hardy plants for the home, and trees for growing in the home. And there have been more.

Speaking of more, we'll give you more on "A Better Way" in next week's issue.

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MAYBE...JUST MAYBE

On other TV fronts, Herb Jackson, Chicago AMS et al, called to tell Larry Quinn that "Today" contemplates another agricultural remote from the Midwest in late March. Nothing definite yet. Herb promises to keep us posted and we'll pass the word on.

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SIZING UP...

Wonder of wonders...the Feds will go to a standard stationery size of 8-1/2 x 11 inches effective Jan. 1, 1980. (In case some of you hadn't noticed, we've used 8 x 10-1/2 in the past.)

Measurements will apply to stationery and related materials such as letterheads, copy sets, second sheets, carbon paper and electrostatically copied reports. JCP set the date so departments can use up present stock.

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Response to the course in regulation writing and editing was so overwhelming that a second session has been scheduled for January. Already it looks as if that course will soon be filled.

SECOND WRITING COURSE

If sufficient additional requests for the course come in, we'll hold a third session. Limit per course is 15 people.

As you recall, the course is designed primarily for those who write regulations for the Federal Register. Cost is \$150. For more dope, contact Claude Gifford, GPA, X78005.

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Recent years have brought a great deal of criticism to government visual operations..."Inside..." told you about new visual regulations in an earlier issue. A report, now due annually to the National Audiovisual Center (NAC) of the General Services Administration (GSA) on USDA AV activities reveals:

AV REPORT RESULTS

USDA--including education and training as well as information--produced 247:30 minutes of in-house films, 212:30 min. of films on contract, and 747:23 min. using both in-house and contractual methods in 1978.

Of video tape/disc productions, 4511 minutes were made in-house, 2728 min. on contract, and 152:30 min. by mixed methods.

Other media--mostly slides--included 36,109:19 minutes produced in-house; 848:35 min. by contract; and 10,873:30 by mixing in-house and contractual methods.

Many critics of government AV work have said commercial industry doesn't get enough work...that government does too much of the work itself. Well....

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A TIP FOR PROOFING

Old hands probably already do this...considering "Inside's..." double-dashed problems, you've probably guessed we don't.

Sue Vega, Chicago FNS, says to catch one's own errors, first read copy frontward for content; then read it backward for typos. Russ Forte, GPA press div., says he's going to start working over his features that way.

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AGNET TO WYO.

A flurry of mail from Wyoming brings details on AGNET, which we've wanted to report on for some time but were too dumb to describe. Wanda Tharaldson sent us the dope:

AGNET originates at the Univ. of Neb...and stands for the Agricultural Computer Network. It provides information on family living, energy conservation, farm profits, irrigation scheduling, and livestock feeding.

Programs written by experts in each field are stored in the computer at Lincoln. AGNET staff has access through a leased telephone line. Wyoming is just getting involved--it's a service that's been used already by Nebraska, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

In Wyoming, AGNET centers soon will be placed in 12 pilot counties...terminals will be run by county agents. An agent can, for instance, get information for a rancher on best selling time of livestock, based on feed costs and market prices. The system--an individualized system which provides basic information and allows the filling in of specific info. to make results individually applicable--also can recommend times to irrigate, once a rancher feeds data on his soil conditions and available water and acreage.

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Herb Pownall, also of Wyoming, sends us a new buzzword--burnout. More on that later if we don't burn out first.

MORE FROM WYO.

Skip Roberts, Wyoming, says Herb will be working in the State Legislature for the next 50-60 days. We hope he doesn't burn out too.

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You in the field probably wonder sometimes what we in D.C. do with all our time. Just as you probably do, we often spend time in meetings...and just as you, we try to avoid meetings as much as we can.

DOWN WITH '78...
UP WITH '79

One meeting, held with fair regularity each week, brings all agency and GPA directors together to check signals, exchange ideas, and discuss developments...little formal structure is involved.

With the beginning of a new year, Ed Goodpaster, GPA, plans to devote a portion of each meeting to a subject area. One week an agency will talk about an aspect of its information program, the next week GPA will lead the discussion on a subject dear to its heart.

King Lovinger, APHIS, brought us a discussion of his radio operation this week. Next week, GPA will focus on publications.

These meetings are not recitations, but exchanges. Ed has asked folks to come prepared to talk about their own operation, to ask questions, and make comments.

While the meetings are for information directors, we know staffs will have ideas we should discuss. So if you've suggestions,

feed them to us. Two ideas already in: word processing equipment and information's role in keeping all staff informed about their department.

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A&M HIRING

From Jim Whitman, Texas A&M, comes word of their need for applicants for an Information Representative II. They are searching for someone with both technical and production experience, who would be responsible for in-house video production, some radio work, and equipment troubleshooting.

Interested folks should write Jim, Project Leader, Dept. of Ag. Comm., Texas A&M, College Station 77843.

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GET INVOLVED...

The National 4-H Council, through Larry Krug, has a new 16mm film about the 4-H Citizenship program...called "Getting Involved." The film is 15 minutes long and available for \$60 from Educational Aids & Publications, National 4-H Council, 150 N. Wacker Drive, Chicago 60606.

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YOU WRITE...
WE CITE

One-time farm broadcaster Phil Alampi says "Inside..." has found fans in the New Jersey Department of Agriculture. Phil now is New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture...has been for many years.

NATIONAL AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT
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Others who've written about "Inside..." recently include Mark Allen, Mich. State; Walter Martin, Peoria SEA; R. Lyle Webster, Hawaii retiree, and Bob Lake, FS. Anyone else who wants to write, welcome. "Inside's..." telephone number is (202) 447-7903.

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SECURITY SECTION

ANYONE FOR TENNIS?

Tom Sand, who labels himself SECFLAK (short for Sec. Bergland's special assistant) sent us the following notice last week:

"1. Helen Bergland gave Bob Bergland a pair of cross country skis for Christmas.

"2. Secretaries of Agriculture--even those who have farmed all their lives--don't get much exercise.

"3. Bob Bergland has a sore back.

"4. Bob Bergland goes to Bethesda Naval Hospital at 9 a.m. today (that was Jan. 3).

"5. Paragraphs three (3) and four (4) are a direct result of paragraphs one (1) and two (2).

"6. So far the trip to Bethesda is just for a checkup. Watch this space for further developments."

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Finally...some tentative schedules not reported earlier:

ENROUTEES...

Jan. 18--Dir. of Econ. Howard Hjort, Pacific Northwest Farm Forum, Spokane.

Jan. 24--Asst. Sec. Alex Mercure, Rural Development meeting, Boise.

Jan. 26--Asst. Sec. Bobby Smith, National Cotton Convention, San Diego.